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SUBJECT: IRAQ; US PENTAGON AND LATIN AMERICA; THE US FOREIGN POLICY;  
CHAVEZ; BOLIVIA; 01/16/07

#### 1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Weekend papers carry opinion pieces on USG policy on Iraq; the relationship between the Pentagon and Latin America; current US foreign policy; Venezuelan President Chavez's announced transformation of his country; and problems in Bolivia.

#### 2. OPINION PIECES

- "Bush said he will send more troops to Iraq even when Capitol Hill is against it"

Ana Baron, Washington-based correspondent for leading "Clarín," writes (01/14) "While the US Congress has clearly stated that it is against sending more troops to Iraq, President Bush is determined to send 21,000 additional US troops to Iraq anyway. In an interview that will be aired today on CBS '60 minutes' program, Bush will say he is aware that both Democratic and some Republican legislators will attempt to obstruct his plan, but that he has 'the authority' and that 'the decision has already been made.'

"... A defiant Bush said yesterday that those opposing his plan should submit an alternative plan 'with greater possibilities of success.' According to Bush, 'opposing everything without proposing anything is irresponsible.'

"As a matter of fact, it is true that Democrats have no alternative plan with consensus. They have not even managed to come to terms on what to do with Bush's proposal."

- "You have it right"

Santiago O'Donnell, international columnist of left-of-center "Página 12" writes (01/14) "... The plan is so good, but let's be honest - it does not guarantee success, although Bush may say the opposite. What it does guarantee is that his successor, surely a leftist, will inherit the problem. And that is 'good.'

"Also, the plan comes with a bonus... While everyone is discussing whether Bush was right or not in having invaded Iraq, no one will question the other 'achievements' of his administration - his handling of hurricane Katrina, legislation in favor of lobbies and the wealthy, the fiscal deficit, the boycott of the Kyoto protocol, religious fanaticism, the teaching in schools of 'intelligent design' (which questions the theory of evolution), the opposition to stem-cell research, lies about Saddam's alleged chemical arsenal, the wall on the US-Mexican border, secret prisons, the legalization of torture."

- "The US Pentagon is redesigning its maps of the hemisphere"

Leading "Clarín" (01/15) carries an op-ed story by Fabian Calle, professor of International Relations at Di Tella University and Catholic University, who writes "... Something is changing in the area of US defense in spite of the fact that Washington's eyes are focused on the Iraqi 'swamp,' Iran, China's rise and the challenges posed by North Korea.

"... (The US Pentagon) has decided to consider the region including Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, Colombia and Venezuela part of the same strategic area...

"... This could facilitate the eventual interest of Argentina, Brazil and Chile in establishing a common regional security and defense area that will also promote peace and stability."

- "Eclipses of Humanity"

Daily-of-record "La Nación" carries an opinion piece by Carlos Floria, professor of Political Sciences at Universidad San Andres and School of Law, National University of Buenos Aires, who writes (01/14) "... Criticism of Republican foreign policy is solid and rooted in neo-conservative arrogance.

"The US needs to return to the Rule of Law and the adherence to international treaties like the Kyoto Protocol on global warming. A review of past foreign policies (of the two political parties) is crucial.

"... They need a long-term policy of demilitarization and support for the UN in order to carry out collective interventions justified by human rights violations, as is the case today in Darfur, and by the principle of defense against an attack.

"The 'change of regime,' a failed argument in the case of Iraq, makes us recall Augusto Comte's precept 'We can only destroy that which we can replace' - a brief and important lesson."

- "Venezuela - the riddles of the 'Chavist revolution'"

Leading "Clarín" carries an op-ed story by its international editor Marcelo Cantelmi, who writes (01/13) "... With bombastic rhetoric and foundational acts, Chavez continues taking advantage of the political and economic crisis from which his leadership emerged.

"... So far and in spite of his noisy speeches, Chavez has always been less than what he says he is... He has maintained a virtual free trade deal with the US that does not provide him with food but fuels his amazing oil profits as the largest oil exporter to the US market.

"He even made some adjustments in his country's economy that were praised by the IMF and paved the way for spectacular revenues for foreign banks, including US banks.

"... Far from his rhetoric, 40 percent of Venezuelans are still in poverty... It is neither casual nor positive that the only moderate voice in his government, VP Jose Vicente Rangel, has left the Venezuelan government...

"This ideological mess not only demonstrates Chavez's own limits but also explains the relationship he established with some figures that are the very antithesis of his ideology, like the Iranian theocracy, in which socialism and relativism would be sufficient grounds to be hanged."

- "Chavez and our energy sovereignty"

Daily-of-record "La Nación" (01/15) carries an op-ed story by Neuquen Governor Jorge Sobisch, who writes "Our country has reasons for concern given the new political and economic panorama in Mercosur following the reforms announced by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, who is infused with a new and messianic spirit.

"... Argentina is undergoing a serious energy crisis, which the Government still has to acknowledge. Chavez is the main financier of the Kirchner administration. He has already purchased Argentine debt bonds for some 3.4 billion dollars... Argentina will surely increase

its dependence on this new (Latin) American dictator."

- "What kind of Socialism does Chavez have in store for Venezuela"

Telma Luzzani, international columnist of leading "Clarín," writes "Hugo Chavez's announced nationalization of oil, telecommunications and utility corporations has shocked the hemisphere. However, these changes are just minimal vis-à-vis the total outline of transformations that Chavez has in store for the future of Venezuela.

"Ranging from constitutional reform that includes gas nationalization and unlimited reelection to unusual experiences like the creation of self-ruled 'community cities', many are the transformations proposed and little is known about them."

- "Alarm over the risk of a 'lebanization'"

Fernando Halperin, columnist of daily-of-record "La Nación," writes (01/13) "What makes the latest violent outburst different from others in rocked Bolivia?"

"... Analysts agree that this time the meaning and consequences of what happens in Cochabamba... could have dramatic implications.

"Some predict a possible 'lebanization' - i.e., the dismemberment of the State.

"During recent years, Bolivia has become at least two countries. One, the traditional one, impoverished, with an indigenous majority, has headed towards a so-called vindication for native and traditionally disregarded inhabitants taken by the hand of a native president...

"However, this model clashes - with increasing violence - with the model put forward by the other country, which is located in the prosperous Eastern region and is in the hands of immigrants' descendants. Their leaders have traditionally occupied governmental positions and today, after consecutive crises, they are attempting to make up the opposition of the native president."

### 13. EDITORIALS

- "Changes in US policy"

Leading "Clarín" (01/13) "The Bush administration is implementing

some foreign policy changes based on the new power scheme on Capitol Hill, in which the Democratic Party prevails. The attention will obviously be focused on the war in Iraq and the claim for an exit strategy for a conflict that is showing the failure of presidential staff's original estimates.

"...The truth is that the US foreign policy should now be more bipartisan and moderate after five years of neo-conservative and unilateral positions. It should also reinforce multilateral diplomacy after several years of interventionist geopolitics.

"On the domestic front, changes should include a brake on the most conservative initiatives related to immigration, social security and rights of minorities. The new Democratic representatives have also warned on the Republican administration's overlook of Latin America.

"This could mean, and it will be good if it happens, a gradual change of view on the situation in the rest of the hemisphere, and on roads to promote social and economic development as well as democratic institutions."

- "Violence and chaos in Cochabamba"

Daily-of-record "La Nación" editorializes (01/13) "the city of Cochabamba, in Bolivia, has suffered a double siege by so-called coca leaders, who respond to President Evo Morales 'Movimiento al Socialismo.' The siege is double - on the one hand, city entrances are cut... On the other hand, the city itself has been divided with barricades placed by the coca-leaders.

"... Order should be preserved, immediately followed by constructive dialogue as the only way to prevent the wave of violence from spreading. However, dialogue calls for mutual respect, tolerance and some flexibility - elements that seem to be absent in a profound crisis that unfortunately threatens to spread itself."

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